

*Introduction:* This is a sermon about hate. I hope that after you hear this message you are filled with hate. We need to be good haters. Our text is verse 10 of Psalm 97, “You who love the LORD, hate evil.” Hate evil! The Hebrew of verse 10 is more forthright than most modern translations: simply, ‘Lovers of the Lord, hate evil!’ [Kidner] Interpreters who believe that an exhortation to hate all evil is out of place at this point will alter the text to arrive at a mild platitude : “The LORD loves those who hate evil” (RSV). [Leupold]

“The Lord” referred to here is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. The first chapter of Hebrews presents a series of testimonies to the supremacy of Jesus over the angels. Verse 7 of Psalm 97 is loosely quoted in Hebrews 1:6, “When He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’” Psalm 97 is dealing with the second coming of Christ when all the peoples will see His glory, and how we are to live in the light of the Day of Judgment and the return of our Lord. Therefore, “You who love the LORD, hate evil.”

Hebrews 1:8-9 goes on to quote Psalm 45:6-7 and speaks of the contrast between the angels and the Son by the decree concerning the Son: “A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.” In the ancient world, the scepter symbolized royalty and monarchy. Why does Jesus have the scepter of righteousness? Jesus, as King of kings, has this symbol because He loves righteousness and loathes evil and wickedness. [Stephen Nicholas, *R. C. Sproul: A Life*, p. 312-313] His hatred of evil confronts our society and ourselves.

**Concerning our society**, social analysts have sifted through reams of research and have concluded that the American view of God may be summarized as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” God is viewed as a combination of a “Divine Butler and a Cosmic Therapists.” [Stephen Nicholas, *R. C. Sproul: A Life*, p. 293] In other words, God exists to do our bidding and to make us feel OK. Our society has a lot of hate but little concern about hating evil.

**Concerning ourselves**, we do not naturally hate evil. We naturally love sin. We are intrigued by wrong in other people, and we do not want to part with the sins we ourselves are practicing. We must learn to hate sin. We will if we know God. If you know God, you will hate sin simply because it is contrary to His character. Richard Sibbes, one of the great Puritan divines, often thought about the nature of human personality and how we can examine ourselves profitably. He observed that hating sin is a proof of our conversion. Therefore, it is important that we truly loathe and hate sin from the heart. Sibbes wrote,

“A man may avoid an evil action from fear, or out of other respects, but that is not sincerity. Therefore look to thy heart, see that thou hate evil, and let it come from sincere looking to God.” [C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Vol. 2, Part 2, p. 205]

Psalm 97:10 tells us that if we love the Lord, we will hate what He hates. Particularly, we will hate what is opposed to Him. Evil is anti-god. If we love God, then we will hate evil. The love of God and the hatred of evil are the two sides of the same coin. We hate because we love.

If someone breaks the heart of your best friend, you would feel anger against that person because you love your friend. It is your love for your friend that makes you so angry. If someone hurts your husband, wife, or child, you would NOT greet that with a surge of the shoulders or a tolerant smile. You would be enraged to the depths of your being. Why? Because you are a loving person. Because you love you hate that which injures or opposes the ones you love.

We are to hate what God hates. For example, Zechariah 8:17 records, “Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate, says the LORD.” The LORD says to the house of Israel in Amos 5:15, “Hate evil, love good.” This is not just an Old Testament doctrine. If it was, it would still be true and applicable. Nonetheless it is reinforced for us in the New Testament. In Romans 12:9, Paul speaks about love. He says, “Let love be genuine.” How does he continue? “Abhor what is evil.” Abhor! The Greek word that translates “abhor” means “to have a vehement dislike for, to hate strongly.” Hate strongly what is evil. Revelation 2 records that Jesus Christ hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans in Ephesus (v. 6), and hates the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in Pergamos (v. 15).

It is necessary to hate. It is also dangerous, extremely dangerous. It is like a sharp knife. A sharp knife is a useful instrument. It is valuable, and yet potentially deadly if you don't handle it properly. Hatred is like that. Hatred can be a good thing, a cleansing thing, or a god-like thing. It can also be terribly damaging. We need safeguards for hatred. This is a pastoral and thematic message. We focus on the exhortation, “You who love the LORD, hate evil.” Let us think about five perspectives in which we can hate that are glorifying to God and helpful to our souls. These are ways we can hate without cutting or stabbing ourselves. Our hatred must be pervasive, principled, positive, practical, and personal.

**FIRST, OUR HATRED MUST BE PERVASIVE.**

We are not to be selective. We are to hate all evil in whatever form it comes. We are not to pick and choose. Everything that is described as sin in the Word we are to hate. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Some sins are easy to hate. We hate them naturally: the sin of murder or the sin of theft. No normal person defends these things. Most people regard these as awful, detestable. We dislike them. We are against them. It's easy to hate these things.

There are other things that are not so clear cut. About these we tend to make allowances or excuses, especially when it suits us: for example, the sin of gossip. What a corroding and destructive sin that is. It is malicious, unkind, often untrue talk about the worst in others. How endemic it can be among Christian people. How sweet those morsels of gossip are on our tongues. We can't wait to pass them on. Yes, we may adopt a pious tone of voice and a somber face. "Didn't you hear about her? Isn't it awful?" Inside you the little demon is jumping up and down with glee and clapping his hands. What about malice, or selfishness, or pride? What about assuming the worst in others?

There was a lady with a black poodle dog. It was one of the nastiest, vicious brutes you have ever seen. The dog was a horror. This old lady loved it. If you saw her there would be scratch marks and bit marks on her hand, but she would never say anything bad about the dog. It was her dog and she loved it. It was her pet. It could do no wrong. We treat some of our sins like that dog. We domesticate them. We tame them. They are ours. We are used to them. They have been in our hearts for a long time. We don't see how nasty and ugly they are. We are blind to them. We are not to do that to sin.

Remember the Catechism: "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God" [WSC 14]. Any! "Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come" [WSC 84]. No exception! God "is terribly displeased with our inborn as well as our actual sins, and will punish them in just judgment in time and eternity" [HC 10]. Matthew Henry comments, "Never did God's hatred of sin appear so conspicuously as it did in the sufferings of Christ." We must hate all sin in whatever form it comes, under whatever disguise, with whatever excuse, no matter how culturally acceptable it may be, no matter how acceptably in our own circles. Evil is our enemy. Our hatred must be pervasive.

**SECOND, OUR HATRED MUST BE PRINCIPLED.**

Someone becomes a good hater, and perhaps too good. We begin to confuse hatred of evil with hatred of those who are involved in evil. This is a delicate and difficult distinction to make. Psalm 5:5 says, “The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.” Psalm 139:21-22 says, “Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.” How are we to understand these assertions? The psalmist is able to hate people in a godly way. That is not easy to do.

What we certainly are to do is to hate the sin with all our heart. If we fall into hating those involved in the sin there is the danger of displeasing God. There is the danger of being too harsh and self-righteous. There is the danger of cutting ourselves off from others. However, it is a lie to generalize and say, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” What about the case of Esau or Judas? There is a real sense that God hates sinners. Psalm 7:11 declares, “God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.” Is this possible for us to righteously do? Are we too sinful ourselves?

Remember that during our Lord’s earthly ministry He was accused of being “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Mat. 11:19; Luk. 7:34). Not just converted sinners. Not just repentant sinners. His enemies said, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luk. 15:2). No human being ever hated sin more passionately, intensely, or utterly than the Son of God. He hated evil as no one has ever hated evil. No one ever loved sinful people more passionately. They knew it. We must work to balance hating sin and expressing concern for the well-being of the sinner. Are there times when it is right to hate the sinner as well as the sin? We are to hate the sin in its principle, in its essence.

Think of it this way: we hate sin because we love people. We love the people who are sinning. We see what sin is doing to them and will do to them. We see what they will have to answer on the Day of Judgment. We see the guilt that rests on their soul. We see the fearful reckoning that is ahead of them because of their sin. When we see people deeply involved in sin, let us not be too quick to dislike and dismiss. Let us feel a deep measure of pity and concern. That is who we are apart from God’s grace. The only difference between them and us is that Christ had mercy upon us. Our hatred must be pervasive, and principled.

**THIRD, OUR HATRED MUST BE POSITIVE.**

Proverbs 8:13 begins, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.” Psalm 97:10 begins, “You who love the LORD, hate evil!” The context is “you who love the LORD.” Because you fear and love the Lord, and as you fear and love the Lord, therefore you hate evil. In other words, our hatred of evil is to spring from our love for Christ.

Negative thinking damages us. It makes us sour. Some Christians are obsessed with the presence, power, and pollution of evil. What they say is true, but it is also spiritually dangerous. To focus on evil runs the risk of being self-destructive, cynical, sarcastic, and judgmental. The milk of human kindness curdles in us.

Rather, we are to fall in love with our Lord. We are to fill our hearts and minds with the holiness and purity of Jesus Christ. We are to study Him. We are to observe Him. We are to think more and more about Him. We are to seek to become closer to Him. We are to become more and more like Him, more filled with the fruit of the Spirit. As we do we will change in a good way. We will be more sensitive to evil. It becomes more offensive to us, more hateful. Yet, it will be a more gracious hatred. It will be a healthy, positive hatred. It won't corrode our character. It's like a porcelain jar that holds hatred. Hatred doesn't spill over and disfigure us because it is in the context of love for the Lord Jesus. Our prayer ought to be, “Help me, Lord, to love You more so that I may hate what You hate.” Our hatred must be pervasive, principled, and positive.

**FOURTH, OUR HATRED MUST BE PRACTICAL.**

It is a spiritual law that any emotion that is not expressed in action will become blunted over time. Suppose you are challenged by the Word of God. It speaks to you. Your conscience is pricked and you are rebuked. However, you do nothing. It happens again and you do nothing. Eventually, you will cease to be challenged. If emotional nerves are abused, disregarded, and misled for so long, then they don't react any longer to stimuli. This is true of our hatred of evil. If it remains only a feeling, an emotion, it will die. We will need greater stimuli to arouse us. Eventually, we can look at horror with a shrug of the shoulders.

This is happening in our society. Think of what is being done to unborn babies. Who cares? I regret to ask you to think about abortion, but I'm asking to make you angry. It is the most severe instance of child abuse. Why are people not outside abortion clinics protesting

against the slaughter of innocent babies? What is wrong with us? We live in a society where people have lost the capacity for moral indignation.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833) was a British politician, philanthropist, and a leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade. The DVD “Amazing Grace” follows his courageous quest to end the British slave trade. Wilberforce hated slavery. He was passionate when he thought of what was being done to fellow human beings for money. The issue possessed him. He hated the evil of racial slavery. Part of the problem in the church today is that we don’t hate evil. We have been seduced into thinking we have to be nice and tolerant to all. We are expected to never get angry about anything. However, there are horrors, there are monstrosities, such as child molesting, human trafficking, and pornography. Whenever we can we should do something. The issues involved are complex and huge. Often there is little we can do. We can pray, but often there is little practical action that we can take about the evils in the world.

In this psalm we see God hating evil and doing something about it. In verse 3, “A fire goes before Him, And burns up His enemies round about.” In verse 7, “Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols.” This is part of the motivation for missions. Missionaries hated the evil of unbelief, idolatry, and spiritual darkness. This is part of the movement for Christian social reform. We are soldiers who are called to make war against evil. Are we talking about how we can fight? Do you show that you love the Lord by hating evil? What are you doing about it? Our hatred must be pervasive, principled, positive, and practical.

#### **FIFTH, OUR HATRED MUST BE PERSONAL.**

If we hate evil, we will hate it most of all in ourselves. It’s comparatively comfortable to focus on evil in other people. It makes me feel good and righteous. But what about my own heart? What about your thoughts? What about your words?

Proverbs 6:16-19 warns, “These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

In Psalm 19:12-13, David writes about sin, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me

from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.” David identifies three levels of personal sin: simple errors of ignorance, hidden faults of weakness, and willful sins of defiance.

As David analyzes sin, he starts with simple errors. The Hebrew word means things that we do wrong without meaning to and without wanting to. They are mistakes we make. We fall short. We don’t come up to the standard. These are our simple errors of ignorance.

David says that there are more than errors. He brings up hidden faults. One writer says, “These are not which are too small to see but sins that are too characteristic to register.” They are so much part of us. They are so common. We do them every day. We don’t even see them anymore. Daily we are guilty of hidden faults of weakness.

David goes on more seriously to speak of presumptuous sins, willful sins. He is talking about deliberate, conscious disobedience. “I know this is what God says I must do, but I don’t want to do it and I’m not going to do it.” Or, “I know that God says not to do this, but I am going to do it. I don’t care what God says. I am going to disobey Him.”

All three of these types of sins are in us all. Stupid errors -- we don’t mean to fall short. We just do. Hidden faults -- the sins that we don’t notice because they are so much a part of us. Willful sins -- we deliberately determine to disobey God. We are not good people. We commit errors. We have hidden faults. We sin openly. You must hate personal sin!

To hate personal sin, think about three simple points. First, personal sin you can most easily find. It’s inside you. Look within. Second, personal sin you can most easily deal with. There is a lot of evil in the world, and we can’t do much about it. But the sin within me I can do something about that by God’s grace. If I hate evil, here is where I will begin. I will deal with the evil within me. Third, personal sin is that which no one else in the world can deal with but you. Perhaps God will raise up others to deal with the social evils. But there is only one person who can deal with the evil in your heart. Nobody else can do it. If you don’t deal with it, it will never be done. Here is where our hatred of evil is to begin. Personal sin is most easily found, most easily dealt with, and only you can deal with it. Your heart is where hatred of evil is to have its chief focus. If you start hating evil in yourself you will be kept safe. This will keep you honest, humble, and humane.

Let me set a test before you. Can you accept and be grateful for someone pointing out one of your faults, errors, or sins in your life? Can you be thankful for someone identifying your

mistakes, deceptions, or transgressions? If not, then you love yourself more than you love the Lord. You hate being hurt more than you hate evil. To hate evil is costly. It makes us vulnerable at times. Our hatred of evil must be pervasive, principled, positive, practical, and personal. Hate evil!

*Conclusion:* There is a great promise at the end of verse 10, “He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.” It is more than a promise that we will be kept from harm. It’s a promise of final deliverance from evil. The words in the Lord’s Prayer, “deliver us from evil,” will be completely answered. The Lord will save us from what we hate. We will enter heaven, the world of love, forever. “You who love the LORD, hate evil!” As you leave today, are you filled with hatred? Do you hate evil?

*Prayer:* Give us wisdom, O God. Give us grace. We remember the words of our Lord, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Mat. 7:3). We remember just after the psalmist said how he hated those who did evil, that he immediately -- as it were -- fell on his knees and said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23-24).

Father, we pray that You would open our eyes to things in our hearts and lives that are just wrong: attitudes, habits, conscious disobedience, neglect of duty. We have perhaps grown so familiar with them that we don’t see them in their ugliness. Show us our sin, O God, that we may seek and find Your forgiveness. Help us to hate evil in ourselves.

Father, as we become more like Christ, help us to walk this narrow path of being men and women of love and compassion for others, and yet passionate, and convicted about hating evil and loving holiness. O Lord, we need Your wisdom. We need Your strength. We need Your help to hate evil. This is glorifying to You. It is pleasing to You. We are asking for something that You will give us. It will be good for our church and for our world, and will please our Savior. So we ask confidently in His name. Amen.

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*Resource:* Edward Donnelly, **Safeguards for Haters**, Psalm 97:10, 08/30/2009, Trinity RP Church, Newtownabbey, NI, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com) (Edited and adapted)  
*Psalter Selections:* 5A, 35C, 139C, 97B (On malice and evil) [BPS]